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# Hanks Family

# Nancy Hanks Birthplace Claims Virginia

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

From the files of the Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection H3 Creck, VA. Birth Place

House Where Lincoln's Mother Was Born

Dear Mr. Gannett:
Your last February Comfort speaks of Lincoln's love for his mother. I wonder if you know where she was born. I have seen the old house many a time. She was born at Hat Creek, Va., and lived there until she was twelve years old. The house was always called the old Hanks house. It was a small cahin of one room downstairs and one up. It was on the creek opposite old Hat Creek church where I went to church every Sunday until I was twenty-nine years old. She has a brother, Abraham Hanks buried in Hat Creek churchyard. Before her father moved away he took a soapstone and carved the child's name and dates of hirth and death on it. As a child I have scraped the moss away and read it. I didn't know then that it was Lincoln's uncle, and it was so covered with moss last time I was there that I couldn't read anything. My father told me that his father knew the Hanks family well. He said they were respectable but very poor. I don't know that this will he of any interest to your readers hut so little is known of his mother it seems a pity for anything to he lost.

A friend of Comfort.

Mrs. Ben Caenniss, Brookneal, R. R. 1, Va.

2006 1 11 ogo pens 1915

For Hatt creek redution see Synchburg's Rivner Junbus by Douglas & Brown

Some brune back I seem in a Receive Cont. Eters a celler book "houry banks," Jum its pages I cam arens she states she name banks ever bonnen auch cunty. ---The mest truing I went be amelia County I got the fle Dew Tooks are Gother of her father involvents really helding, nor trung for is hourselving a commentum fuller only build verned by leasy described for ancholis on the thorney Countilly on Barbone Creek (they arreless how hottowery Countilly) are as for as circle are weekerif having the lity by walter privation Julie y vast Jetany Sept 1925

#### Traditional Nancy Hanks Birthplace

#### Exceppt

"Notes on Southside Virginia" Walter A. Watson Bulletin of Va. State Library, Sep 1925

"Some time back I saw on a shelf in a Richmond Book Store a little book "Nancy Hanks." ..... Turning its pages I came across the statement that Nancy Hanks was born in Amelia County.

"The next time I went to Amelia I got the old deed books and looked up her father's moderate reality holdings ..... no time for exhaustive research ..... the only land recorded by him seemed to located on Barebone Creek(Then Amelia now Nottoway County.) and so far as I could see without tracing the lines it was in the vicinity of Ham's and Ellets"

Brook mal Va Ace 12# 1929 Her Locies A Warren Fort Wayne Indianna my dear mr Wann Monor letter in regard to the Hanks Ster father of Maney Hanks was Abraham Hanks. They moved from this Community To time butween 1790 and 1800, and the tradition that used to be circulated in Harles married a man by the name of Abraham after her failer. don't think that these feets busche very find by any records or historical The grave storm that you photograps is the brother of nancy Handke and dies 1800.

This is all that mulustood on account of the ravings of time

The Slab borned graves you asked about are the graves of the Irvine who were among the

first siteline of this Dannety they cannot from Prosphan some time abold 1738 I will be glad to do any thing I can to help your salve this matters With best wishes I am Jours Truly Williams

November 19, 1936

Martha Revers Adams Lynchburg News Lynchburg, Virginia

My dear Madam:

This hurried note is to thank you for your hospitality and curresses extended while I was in Lynchburg and for the very interesting evening which you made possible in your home.

I will appreciate it very much if you will keep me advised of any new traditions which may crop up about the maternity of Lincoln and the probable place of Mancy Hanks birth, as I contemplate issuing in the near future a brief bulletin on the various claims which have been made by different communities where it is said she was born.

I have not as yet received my Virginia itinerary for February but will advise you about it as soon as it is ready.

I am placing your name on our mailing list to receive Lincoln Lore, which I edit and which I am sending with my compliments.

Yours very truly

LAW: LH

Director

A.E.Ewing
538 Michigan Trust Co.Bldg.,
Grand Rapids, Mich.,
June 2,1937.

Roy B. Cook, Charleston, W. Va. Dear Mr. Cook:

Answering your question of May 29 about the Monroe County Hanks, beg to say the name used for the last hundred years or more has been HANK. Some of the old timers got into the records as Hanks, and

have been known to sign it that way.

The Monroe Co. Hanks, founded by William Hank in 1791, comes down in a straight line from England. William's father was John Hank, his grandfather was John Hank, and his great grandfather was John Hank. The first John came to Philadelphia soon after William Penn founded a colony for persecuted Quakers. The Hanks were Quakers. The third John moved to Rockingham Co., perhaps about 1774. He and his wife and two or three daughters were disowned by the Virginia Quakers. William married Susannah Berry, a Scotch Presbyterian, in Rockingham, but after they moved to Greenbrier (now Monroe) they became Methodist, and two of their sons; William and Jehu, became Methodist ministers. Their other three sons, David, Caleb and John, were farmers. Caleb --- born in 1789 --- was my own grandfather. David moved to Ohio in la Randa Lake water 1837, and Caleb in 1846. John died in 1831. William, the preacher, did not live in Monroe after he went into the ministry. Jehu, the younger, born in 1801, went into the ministry, but returned to Monroe after the death of his mother in 1837, made his home there, and raised his family of several boys and girls on the Turkey Creek Hank lands. Jehu died in 1882. His children are all dead except possibly one son, Wilbur F., who was alive the last I knew and resided at Belle Point in Summers Co., and will be --- if living --- 89 the 23rd of this month. Wilbur --- if living --- is the sole surviving grandson of William Hank, the founder of the Monroe Co.family.

The Hanks of Nancy Hanks Lincoln fame, may or may not have been collaterally connected with our tripple John Hank line. When it became known that Lincoln came from Rockingham ancestors and that his mother was Nancy Hanks -- in about 1860, I judge --- my grandfather Caleb, and Ohio descendants of his aunt, Margaret Hank Cherrington, came to the conclusion, in a purely traditional way, based upon ancient recollections and the likeness or similarity of the names Hank and Hanks; that our Hanks and the Lincoln Hankses were closely related. I believed it up to a few years ago, and am responsible for the unwarranted statement (made in good faith) in Price's Hist. of Poca. Co., that my mother Nancy Hank Ewing was a second cousin of Abraham Lincoln. I am trying hard now to counteract the statement. The Cherrington descendants of Margaret Hank Cherrington went so far as to go into Ohio history with the statement that Margaret Hank Cher rington was a sister of Nancy Hanks. This was published in 1884, and the Hank-Cherringtons of southern Ohio swear by it as they do the Sermon on the Mount. We know now that the statement was utterly unwarranted. Thank to Quaker records, we know the names of all the children of the third John Hank, and there is no Nancy among them. We also know that the third John Hank was dead at least three years before Nancy Hanks was born, and that the mooted mother of her was a sixty year old widow by the time Nancy Hanks was born. Thus a choice tradition has been exploded. You may not be

Hanks was born. Thus a choice tradition has been exploded. You may not be interested in all these details, but you asked about it and I cannot make myself clear without stating the "whys and wherefores".

Authorities on Nancy Hanks disagree. I have read Hitchcock, Barton, Tarbell, Warren and others and, as nearly as I can tell, no two of them agree. Hitchcock claims Nancy's ancestors came from Massachusets. Barton concluded that because one Joseph Hanks family of 11 disappeared

from tidewater Virginia one year and the next year a Joseph Hanks with a family offl appeared in Hampshire Co., that the two Josephs were one and the same, and I felt that he had made a pretty good case. I don't just understand who has "thrown him out of court", but I have seen something to the effect that you have---as you state it---"a nice monument to trade" over near Keyser. I believe, too, that Andrew Price was sold on the Barton theory. Ida Tarbell was not so sold. Andrew Price wrote a long article for the newspapers in which he unqualifiedly connected the Monroe Hanks with the Joseph Hankses. It may be of passing interest to you to know that John Hank, son of William of Monroe, married one Rebecca Price who was in some way related to the Pocahontas Prices. (See Price's Hist., p. 547). John and Rebecca named a son Thomas Price Hank.

There yet remains one rusty nail upon which we may tentatively hang our hat. The grandfather of Nancy Hanks Lincoln was a Joseph Hanks. William Hank of Monroe had an uncle Joseph Hank. This uncle Joseph, a son of the 2nd John Hank, was born in Berks Co.Pa. in 1725. He could, so far as the period of time was concerned, have been the grandfather of a baby born as late as 1784. The people of southeastern Pennsylvania have, it is said, nursed the belief that said Joseph Hank was in fact the grandfather of Nancy Hanks Lincoln. So far as we now know, however, he never left pennsylvania. He was complained of by Quakers in the 1750s. It appears that he married a non-Quaker, but her name is not disclosed. Joseph Hank appears on tax lists in Berks Co., as late as 1780. His name does not app ear in the Pa.census of 1790. There are those who contend that this Joseph was the one whose name was found in the Va.census list, Hampshire Co., in 1782. The Hampshire Joseph was, in 1782, head of a family of 11. The Berks Co. Joseph was 57 in 1782, and it does not seem probable that he would then have been head of a family of 11 unless he had an extensive second broad of children. Whether the Joseph Hanks who showed up in in Kentucky as the grandfather of Nancy Hanks Lincoln was the Joseph who once lived in tidewater Virginia, or the Joseph who was listed in Hampshire Co., in 1782, or some other Joseph, we will leave to experts. The 2nd John Hank of Penn., had a brother Luke, and it is at least possible that Nancy Hanks Lincoln could have sprung from this Luke Hank, or Hanks, line. We are without proofs, and guesses should be spoken in whispers only. The original Hanks spelled the name Hanke, Hank, Hanks, Hanck, and the spelling alone means little or nothing. The older Hanks of Monroe --- my grandfather Caleb, for instance, a man with constientious regard for truth, claimed --- in the 1860s --- that he knew or knew of a relative by the name of Nanck Hank who went to Kentucky and married a man by the name of Lincoln. Kentucky was full of Lincolns and full of Hanks when my grandfather was a Monroe (Greenbrier) County boy and young man, and it is not at all improbable that the Nancy Hank he knew of and the Lincoln she was reported to have married may have been entirely different persons from the Nancy Hanks who married Thomas Lincoln in 1806.

After all has been said, it is a strange coincidence, to say the least, that the ancestors of Abraham Lincoln and the ancestors of William Hank of Monroe were contemporary pioneers in Pennsylvania, that Abraham Lincoln's father and William Hank's father both lived in the same section off Rockingham Co., during the same period, and that they must have known one another and were perhaps neighbors before the movement to Kentucky set in. I at least have a great amount of charity for those who believe that Nancy Hanks Lincoln sprung from the Hanks of Berks Co., Pa., and later of Rockingham Co.Va.

Yours very truly

Alvin Enoth Eving son of
Nancy Ann Hank Ewing, born in Monroe Co.
in 1840.

August 6, 1937

Mr. Roy B. Cook, Secretary West Virginia Board of Pharmacy Charleston, West Virginia

My dear Mr. Cook:

It was kind of you, indeed, to forward the correspondence with Mr. Ewing about the Hank family. I have had the pleasure of meeting him in his home and know he has done a very fine piece of research work on the immediate branch of the family.

Some years ago when I visited with Mr. Price in West Virginia we went out to one or two hf the old Hanks homesteads and if I recall correctly, one of them is the old home of Chief Jehu.

I think we will eventually find out that the Joseph Hanks was really in Mineral County but a short time and then returned to Pennsylvania instead of woming on to Kentucky and represents an entirely different family.

You may feel quite sure that as soon as something definite can be discovered, you will be informed as to our findings.

Yours very truly,

LAW: HB

Director

# Paul H. Verduin\*\*Independent Writer 721 Dartmouth Ave., Silver Spring, MD 20910 (301) 495-7891

Dr. Mark E. Neely, Jr. Louis A. Warren Lincoln Library P.O. Box 1110 Fort Wayne, Indiana 46801

Nov. 8, 1988

Re: New Discoveries Concerning Lincoln's Mother's Family in 18th-Century Richmond County, Virginia

Dear Dr. Neely:

Enclosed you will find the following:

- 1) Copy of Oct. 28 front-page article appearing in the <u>Richmond Times-</u>Dispatch, Virginia's leading newspaper, reporting on my research.
- 2) Copy of the article, corrected for minor reporter and typesetting errors.
- 3) Manuscript copy of follow-up op-ed article I've written for the Times-Dispatch.
- 4) A twelve-page press-release-type summary of my research.

Since news of my research and rather provocative findings concerning the history of Lincoln's Hanks forebears in the slavery-dominated Tidewater region of Virginia during the eighteenth century is now reaching the press, I feel it is high time I share with you what I'm up to. It seems best not to try to summarize it in a few sentences in the body of this letter. I would refer you to the article and background materials for that purpose. But I believe my discoveries in neglected primary documents bear considerable implications for our understanding of Lincoln himself. This is not a mere exercise in genealogy.

As you know, during the 1920s William E. Barton called attention to references to Lincoln's great-grandfather Joseph Hanks, and relatives of his, in the court records of Richmond County, Virginia, which is on the tidal portion of the Rappahannock River. But I have discovered, through two years of tedious part-time research there and elsewhere, that Barton only scratched the surface of these documents. He had the clerk of that county consult the partial indexes of the volumes of deeds, mortgages, wills, court orders, church records, and estate accounts, but a great deal was missed. What was found was in part misinterpreted in his 1929 Lineage of Lincoln, in my view a poorly researched and poorly written book. Yet, Barton's greatest disservice was leading his readers (and many Lincoln scholars) to believe that he had found all that was to be found. His death the following year prevented any follow-up on his part.

Barton also made errors in his Kentucky research on Lincoln's Hanks forebears. For example, Lincoln's maternal grandmother, Lucey Hanks,

Paul H. Verduin/Nov. 8, 1988/page 2

resided from 1789 or earlier, until her death in the 1820s, with her husband Henry Sparrow in the part of old Mercer County that is now Boyle County. The couple lived near the Chaplin River and Doctors Fork--they did not live in the area that later became Anderson County, as Barton claimed.

For several weeks, I have been in contact with Chuck Strozier at CUNY in New York, who has thus far encouraged my work. Just last week, I called Tom Schwartz at the Illinois Historical Library, a few days after the reporter called him. I think he now views my work in a much more positive light than his immediate reaction, as quoted in the Times-Dispatch, would lead one to believe.

I recognize the importance of sharing my findings and interpretations with other Lincoln scholars, as well as late-eighteenth century historians; and of course that includes you, for I am aware of your many contributions to Lincoln scholarship. I have chosen to be rather secretive about my research up till now, because it is of course somewhat audacious for me to think that there is something I have to contribute that may shed light on Lincoln's sense of identity and attitudes toward slavery and the American union. But now, I look forward to the give-and-take of scholarly debate, and the reactions of yourself and others to my work.

To that end, in a few weeks I will send you an advance copy of the heavily footnoted, formal report on my research that will appear in the December issue of the annual journal of the Northern Neck of Virginia Historical Society—a venerable publication that covers the six—county area Virginians call the Northern Neck. The area is steeped in historical tradition as the birthplace of the Lees, and of Washington, Madison, and Monroe. At the time of the American Revolution, half of its people were slaves, and many of the whites were landless tenants.

My wife and I spent a few hours at your museum and library on a day last May, en route from her parents' home in Ohio to Petersburg, Illinois, where we did a bit of research in the Menard County court records on the cases Lincoln handled there. Your assistants, Ruth Cook and Marilyn Tolbert, graciously allowed us to consult the Library's files on Hanks research and correspondence kept by your predecessor Louis Warren. We thank them for that privilege.

In closing, let me say that I invite your initial reactions to that part of my work I am sharing with you at this time. The report citing my specific sources in the primary data will follow soon.

One other item: I am seeking the current whereabouts of the so-called "Lucey Hanks autograph" that Warren and Barton each studied in the courthouse of Mercer County, Kentucky around 1925, and commented on in their subsequent books. (Barton, Life of Lincoln, pp. 61-62 (photo); Warren, Lincoln's Parentage, p. 33.) The current county clerk has told me that the item-a 3-by-5 scrap of paper which reportedly was in Lucey's own hand, which certified her willingness on April 26, 1790 to marry Henry Sparrow-was eventually "stolen" from the courthouse, possibly after being borrowed for study at the Newberry Library in

Paul H. Verduin/Nov. 8, 1988/ page 3

Chicago. If you or your staff can determine whether it still exists, and where, I would be most appreciative.

Sincerely,

Paul N. Werdum

Paul H. Verduin

ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S MOTHER MAY HAVE BEEN BORN IN TIDEWATER VIRGINIA, SURROUNDED BY SLAVERY, NEWLY FOUND EVIDENCE SUGGESTS

LEGEND OF LINCOLN'S "NOBLEMAN" GRANDFATHER, A WELL-BRED VIRGINIA PLANTER, MAY YET BE PROVEN FACTUAL, HISTORICAL RESEARCHER ASSERTS

Historians' View of Lincoln's Self-Concept May be Dramatically Altered by Overlooked Court House and Archival Documents

Contact: Paul H. Verduin, 721 Dartmouth Ave., Silver Spring, MD 20910 Phone: (301) 495-7891

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A historical researcher and writer claims he has found new evidence in previously overlooked documents suggesting that President Abraham Lincoln's mother, Nancy Hanks Lincoln, may have been born in the tidewater region of Virginia -- at a location he has identified near the Rappahannock River in Richmond County--and not in the hills of West Virginia, as most historians until now have thought.

The researcher says he has uncovered convincing evidence that Lincoln's mother's forebears were tenants and plantation overseers working for, and living in close proximity to, some prominent aristocratic slaveowning families of Revolutionary-War-era Virginia.

The Lincoln investigator alains his se in long-k Kentuc

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For contact information, go to www.LincolnCollection.org.

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grandm nobleman," or "well-bred planter," and that his mother was born as a result of that liaison. But until now, the old legend had never been put to the test of empirical research, and Lincoln biographers could only speculate on its significance.

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"The new data I've uncovered demonstrates that Lincoln's view of his maternal grandfather may not have been a vain fantasy, or worse yet, a case of misreporting on Herndon's part," says writer-researcher Paul H. Verduin of Silver Spring, Maryland. "There really were wealthy, 'wellbred Virginia planters' living in the immediate neighborhood where Lincoln's teen-age grandmother, Lucey Hanks, was living with her illiterate, poor-white parents in the early 1780s. Some of them, my data shows, employed the Hankses or had other dealings with them. From the 1670s until 1783, just 26 years before Lincoln's birth, slaveholders, slaves and slavery were a part of everyday life for the Hankses."

# OP-ED PIECE WRITTEN FOR TIMES-DISPATCHE

RITER SEEKS HELP IN FINDING LINCOLN'S VIRGINIA ROOTS

by Paul H. Verduin Copyright November, 1988 by Paul H. Verduin All rights reserved. Author's phone number: (301) 495-7891

Abraham Lincoln's mother, my recent research suggests, was quite possibly born in Virginia's Northern Neck rather than in West Virginia. It also suggests that the old legend that she was the daughter of a Revolutionary-era Virginia aristocrat could be true after all. But I need the help of Virginians to find out whether or not these things are so. Our understanding of Lincoln may be revolutionized by the outcome.

Many of you read the front-page report on my controversial discoveries and theories in the <u>Richmond Times-Dispatch</u> of October 28. More than a few readers called me to contribute rumors, hypotheses and in a couple of cases solid information about members of Lincoln's mother's clanthe Hankses--who lived in different parts of Virginia during the late 1700s. My thanks go to you for your interest and support.

I must clarify, however, that what is really needed at this point to resolve the central mysteries concerning the birthdate, birthplace, and paternity of Lincoln's obscure mother is for people to help find old, original documents and records of people of any surname who lived, worked, or conducted business in Richmond County during the period 1750-1800. Old family letters, leases, or deeds; plantation and merchant account books; Baptist and Methodist membership lists and minutes; and legends passed down from that remote time among both black and whi

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ancestors and their neighbors and associates.

I have also ferreted out microfilms and old manuscripts housed in the Virginia Historical Society, the Virginia Baptist Historical Society, the National Archives, Georgetown University, and the courthouse in Menard County, Illinois where Lincoln tried some of his legal cases. Occasionally, I have endured the suspicions of overly protective archivists and curators, fearful of divulging the specific object of my quest and being viewed as a crackpot. But despite all this effort, I know that there are old 18th-century papers of Richmond County residents in the possession of people and institutions around the state, and around the country for that matter, that I haven't seen.

I need the help of Virginians in finding these unidentified records of Revolutionary War era Richmond County citizens. Together, we may be able to reconstruct the Virginia element in Lincoln's heritage.

CORRECTIONS OF REPERTERIS AND TYPESETTERIS ERRORS, P.W. 11/7/88

# Writer looks for Lincoln's state roots

WARSAW — A free-lance writer believes Abraham Lincoln's self-image and attitude to-ward slavery originated in the plantation society of Tidewater where his little-known maternal

or linewater where his little-known maternal ancestors included an overseer who may have beats, a runaway slave to death. "There's a lot of drama here," said Paul H. Verduin, who began his exploration of Richmond County's 18th century Hanks family two years

ago and is searching the county clerk's office for evidence of the family's past.

"The story by nature is controversial; it's dra-matic and there's nothing I can do to make it otherwise," he said.

Otherwise, he said.

Take, for instance, the parentage of Lincoln's mother, Nancy Hanks, who is generally accepted by historians as having been illegitimate.

Verduin is hoping to identify her father, who has remained a mystery since 1889 when Lincoln's biographer and Illinois law partner, Wil-

In Herndon's three-part volume on the 16th president, "Lincoln himself said that his grandfather was a well-bred Virginia farmer," Verduin said, "and he argued that important traits, such as his ambition, were passed down from that as his am Virginian.

Lincoln either did not know his grandfather's Continued on page 2, col. 3

## Writer searching 'Neck' for Lincoln's state roots

Continued from first page

name or else chose not to disclose it.

Verduin said.

Verduin has identified several planters who fit Lincoln's description and who lived close enough to the Hankses to have known Lucey Hanks, Nancy Hanks' mother.

"While it's true I have not nar-rowed down who the grandfather of Lincoln may have been, I have two leading candidates;" he said. "One is Griffin Fauntleroy, whose own father had a concubine at the time." he said.

time," he said.

Fauntieroy was a young militia of-ficer who employed Lucey Hanks' fa-ther, Joseph Hanks, as an overseer on his nearby plantation; be may also have been Hanks' landlord, Verduin

Verduin's other candidate could shake historians: Elisba Lingan Hall, the son of Hannan Ludwell Lee cousin of Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee.

in of Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee.
In addition to reasing bis mother's plantation, which bordered the
area near Sharps where Verduin
thinks the Hankses lived, Hall also
as a treated of the county's early
Baptist Church, which Verduin believes counted the Hankses as mem-bers. Of here 155. But Verduin said he basn't uncov-

ered the evidence needed to name the grandfather — more study awaits.

The Hanks family exploration is the only major historical investigation Verduin bas undertaken other than tracing his family bistory to

Europe.

A free-lancer who specializes in urban topics, Verduin, 43, studied historical research while working on his master's degree in urban studies at the University of Maryland. He lives in Silver Spring, Md.

He decided to plumb Lincoln's Richmond County connection because it is so dimly understood.
"It's intriguing, what he's up to,"

cause it is so dimly understood.
"It's intriguing, what he's up to,"
said Charles B. Strozier, a Lincoln
historian in New York who has been
following Verduin's research.
"I think he's doing some important
work. He's digging in archives and
doing some basic research in Lincoln,
genealogy that hasn't been done in 60.4 genealogy that hasn't been done in 60

years.
"His research will be significant if
he finds all the things he hopes to

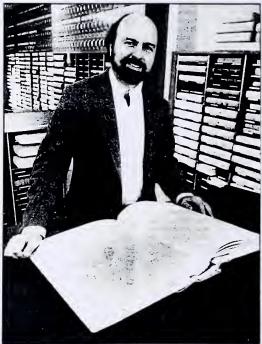
Verduin's basic premise is that the Hanks' family experience shaped Lincoin's views about slavery and that Lincoin's notions about his well-bred grandfather gave him a claim to sta-tus that his illiterate Hanks kin lacked.

Lincoln told his law partner "that he inherited his powers of analysis, logic, his mental activity and his amhition from this grandfather he never knew," Verduin said.

The hypothesis is controversial, Vcrduin admits.

The part about the family experi-

ence shaping Lincoln's views on slavery, stretches logic, said Thomas Schwartz, curator of Lincoln history for the Iilinois State Historical



**LOOKING FOR LINCOLN** — Paul H. Verduin has spent two years checking records of Abraham Lincoln's family

"Lincoln took a riverboat ride to New Orleans and saw slaves in sback-les," Schwartz said. "Why try to fabri-cate an argument on a very weak piece of evidence when we have very seeing slaves] from the man him-self?"

But Verduin stands by his premise even though Lincoln, the president who freed the nation's slaves, was born in a Keniucky cabin, a years after his great-grandfather moved the family from Virginia.

"The Lincolns didn't live with slavers in Keniucky the way the Harbers."

ery in Kentucky the way the Hankses ery in Kentucky the way the Hankses did in Richmond County," he argued. "The Hankses lived with it for gener-ations and that would have had more impact on Lincoln's knowledge." Verduin has discovered that Lin-

vertuin has discovered that Lin-coln's great-great-grandfather, Wil-liam Lee, (no relation to the Lees of Stratford Hall) was a plantation over-seer in charge of slaves in Richmond County. He makes a case that Joseph

County, he makes a case that Joseph Hanks was similarly employed.

"There was a long period, you might say, when they were up to their necks in slaves," Verduin said.

"Poor whites," as Verduin called them, the 18th century Hankses "were

but they could not break out of their low, subsistence 'lifestyle' because working on their own, they were un-able to compete with slave labor that made large plantations profitable, he

said.
It was William Lee who Verduin said was accused of whipping a slave to death in 1743.
The court record book for Richmond County from 1710 to 1754 shows. Lee was charged "for felonious Cilling Will, a mangfave" who belonged to Thomas Barber, whom Lee served as overseer. as overseer.

as overseer.
Four county residents testified at Lee's arraignment before the gentle-men justices that Lee whipped the slave over a period of days for punish-ment as a runaway.

Whether Lee was convicted is unknown, Verduin said. Court records at the Colonial capital of Williamsburg, where the trial would have been held, have been lost.

Verduln thinks stories about William Lee and the family's experience as overseers were passed down in the family until they reached Lincoln's

Hc also challenges the assumption both the oppressor and the oppressed" in the slavery system.
"If they took these jobs as overseet, they were part of the slavery system."
"If they took these jobs as overseet, they were part of the slavery system."

October 28, 1988 Richmond, Virginia 23219 otherwise, 1 hape to 138th Year. No

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NEW EVIDENCE SUGGESTS LINCOLN'S MOTHER BORN IN RICHMOND COUNTY, VIRGINIA, GIVING CREDIBILITY TO PLANTER-GRANDFATHER LEGEND

By Paul H. Verduin

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(Scheduled for publication in the December, 1988 issue of the Northern

Neck of Virginia Historical Magazine, the annual journal of the

Northern Neck of Virginia Historical Society.)

Lincoln all at once said: "Billy, I'll tell you something, but keep it a secret while I live. My mother was a bastard, was the daughter of a nobleman so called of Virginia. My mother's mother was poor and credulous, etc., and she was shamefully taken advantage of by the man. My mother inherited his qualities and I hers. All that I am or ever hope to be I get from my mother, God bless her."\*1

These raw, shocking words were reportedly spoken by Springfield, Illinois lawyer Abraham Lincoln to William H. Herndon, his law-practice partner, about ten years before Lincoln's election to the presidency. The two were alone, Herndon later claimed, on a half-day's horse-and-buggy ride to neighboring Menard County, and the complicated inheritance case they were prosecuting there brought to Lincoln's mind his own tangled heritage. From the words there streams, like a shaft of light, a dimension of our 16th president's inner sense of identity that scholars have never adequately explored.

This articl previously primary dat Virginia "rapparent be figure. If he owed to aristocrat commonweal!

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For contact information, go to www.LincolnCollection.org.

Lincoln's self-concept, self-esteem, and sense of reconcept much wrapped up in his personal conception of this individual.

Like many others in his day, Abraham Lincoln seems to have held to the view that character elements and intellectual aptitude are directly determined by inherited traits. By late-20th-century standards, such a view is unscientific. Few today would dispute the fact that parental guidance, educational opportunities, peer relationships, and personal experience are much more significant. Nonetheless, it is highly important to our understanding of Lincoln if he himself thought his mother's father's genes were what enabled him to move up in life.

Beyond the question of Lincoln's mother's paternity, the object of the research has been to determine if evidence could be found that would improve our understanding of the roots of Lincoln's own sense of identity, and of his basic attitudes toward the central issues in his life and thought--liberty and the American Union.

### LINCOLN'S TIDEWATER VIRGINIA HERITAGE: THE HIDDEN LEGACY OF NANCY HANKS LINCOLN

An Address to the Lincoln Group of the District of Columbia Presented October 17, 1989

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(For additional copies, call (301) 495-7891, or write: 721 Dartmouth Ave., Silver Spring, MD 20910)

On a little knoll near Pigeon Creek in southern Indiana, at a place that is now a national memorial, the graves of five persons are arranged side by side. In the center, marked with a beautiful weathered white stone, is the grave of Nancy Hanks Lincoln, the mother of Abraham Lincoln, our revered Civil War president. Nancy Lincoln died there on October 5, 1818, "aged 35 years," according to the stone, when her little son Abe was nine years old.

Lincoln as a man was always exceptionally tight-lipped about his mother and her family. When he became a presidential candidate, he talked at great lengths in two autobiographical statements about his <u>Lincoln</u> heritage, as far back as their Quaker origins in Berks County, Pennsylvania during the 1740s and '50s. The story of the 1786 ambush by Indians in Kentucky of his grandfather, Capt. Abraham Lincoln, was one he freely shared with his campaign biographers and the nation. But all he would say about his mother's background was that she was born in Virginia, and was a member of an "undistinguished" family the name of "".

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Lincoln spoke these raw, jolting words, claimed William H. Herndon, Lincoln's biographer and law partner of 16 years, around 1850 while the two were alone on a half-day's horse-and-buggy ride to represent a client in a complicated inheritance case in the Menard County Circuit Court in Petersburg, a small town in central Illinois. The words, as quoted above, are from Herndon's March 6, 1870 letter to Ward Hill Lamon, to supply him with information for Lamon's forthcoming Lincoln biography. Herndon continued to insist for two decades that this was what Lincoln had said to him in a spontaneous outburst that grew out of their discussion of the inheritance case on the day's docket.

As told, the story of Lincoln's nobleman grandfather is pregnant with possibility for discovering a hidden aspect of Lincoln's personality. This is so, not because of any traits or genes Lincoln may have

# Paul H. Verduin\*\*Independent Writer 721 Dartmouth Ave., Silver Spring, MD 20910 (301) 495-7891

Oct. 30. 1989

Mark E. Neely, Jr., PhD Director, Louis A. Warren Lincoln Library and Museum P.O. Box 1110, Fort Wayne, IN 46801

Re: Research on Lincoln's Hanks Forebears in Virginia and Kentucky: an Update

Dear Dr. Neely:

Several months have already passed since I received your May 11 letter acknowledging receipt of my Dec., 1988 journal article. I know you are very busy, and that my research topic is a bit outside of your area of specialization, but I want to make available to you the fruits of my labors. Here is the latest. I have gotten useful feedback from David Herbert Donald, Strozier, John Y. Simon, Dwight Anderson, and others on the earlier report, and am expecting fresh comments on my 1989 work, plus a kick to footnote all the documents in my projected book.

I am enclosing a copy of the paper I presented on October 17 to the Lincoln Group of the District of Columbia, entitled "Lincoln's Tidewater Virginia Heritage: The Hidden Legacy of Nancy Hanks Lincoln."

The sixteen-page paper presented highlights of my research, including the following 1989 discoveries:

- \* Lincoln's great-grandfather Joseph Hanks was most definitely a plantation overseer, according to a document discovered among the extensive "loose papers" in the courthouse of Richmond County, Va. The document is a one-page financial accounting of Joseph's overseership for 1762-64 presented to the court by his employer, Col. William Peachey, as evidence in a trifling 1764-65 suit. (See photocopy on page 16, and pages 4-5.)
- \* Col. William Peachey served with Washington as a captain and major during the French and Indian War, and as commander of the fifth regiment of Continental troops at the outset of the American Revolution. He held other Virginia offices as well.
- \* Records from 1789 onward left by Thomas, Joshua, and William Hanks in Hardy Co., (W.) Va., which split off from Hampshire Co. in 1786, bring beyond a reasonable doubt Barton's contention that the Joseph Hanks who made his will in Nelson Co., Ky. in 1793 was the same man as his namesake reported in Hampshire Co. in 1782 and 1784. (See pp. 5-6.)
- \* Census records, court records, tax records and other primary sources for Kentucky, Indiana and Missouri confirm beyond a reasonable doubt the central contentions reflected in Arthur E. Morgan's 1920 article in the <u>Atlantic Monthly</u>: Lincoln's grandmother Lucey had a second illegitimate daughter named Sarah Hanks, who in turn had six illegitimate children of her own. The eldest of the six, Sophie Hanks, was about the same age as

Lincoln, and was apparently a member of the Lincoln household in Indiana for a time prior to her marriage. (See pp. 9-10, and the family tree attached at the end.)

In regard to this last item, I regret that my paper could not do more than point in the general direction of the primary sources that back up so conclusively what I considered for more than a year to be a highly improbable tale. But let me say this, for the moment: Before I took the time to read the Morgan article, I had been struck by the gradual appearance of six unknown children in the household of Henry Sparrow of Mercer Co., Ky. in the censuses of 1820, 1830, and 1840. These records also showed two women in Sparrow's household: one born prior to 1770 (whom I take to be his wife Lucey), and a second, born before the 1790 marriage of Henry and Lucey. I was eventually forced to conclude, on the basis of Mercer Co. litigation at the time of Henry's death, and on the basis of records of the various children as they came of age, that the woman born during the late 1780s was the Sarah Hanks reported by three of her grandchildren to Arthur Morgan in 1909.

I hasten to add that I have not depended on Morgan's late-breaking magazine article, but rather on his original 1909 notes of his interviews with Dr. James LeGrand and the other two informants, plus the letters Morgan received in 1909-10 from LeGrand, which duplicate in LeGrand's own hand what Morgan had obtained from him orally a few weeks earlier. I would not have given these oral traditions the least bit of credibility were it not for the fact that the primary records back them up so thoroughly.

This brief hinting at sources will not, I realize, convince the communities of Lincoln and Virginia scholars that my findings and conclusions (much less my interpretations) are well-founded. For this reason, I am preparing a book-length manuscript that will endeavor to present systematically the record of Lincoln's Hanks forebears from about 1740--their economic, social, and political micro-worlds, their involvement with slavery, their response to the American Revolution, and their westward migrations to Kentucky, Indiana and Illinois.

When a draft of my book is in reasonable shape several months from now, I will be seeking out scholars like yourself to read the manuscript. I suspect the scarcity of everyone's time will be the major factor in determining who agrees to render me the favor of a critical reading. But I would hope that critical comment from recognized Lincoln scholars would facilitate publication by a press capable of accomplishing a wide distribution. I believe scholars and the thinking public deserve access to the results of my research on this neglected topic.

In closing, I am terribly concerned for the fate and safety of perhaps thirty loose documents retrieved from overstuffed, disorderly drawers in the Richmond County courthouse that tell so much about the activities of Lincoln's Hanks forebears during the time of the American Revolution. The County Clerk has temporarily put them in her office safe. Thus far, I have met with apathy from county and Virginia authorities as to their eventual fate. Big guns may be needed to preserve these papers. Do you have any suggestions?

Sincerely,

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# THE ECUICA WANTED

MARK L. M. ELY, Jh. Director lelephone (219) 427-3864

November 27, 1989

Mr. Paul H. Verduin Independent Writer 721 Dartmouth Avenue Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Mr. Verduin:

Writing a book, as I'm sure you know, is a long drawn-out affair. My manuscript, some 500 pages long, is now being copy-edited. I have fresh readers' reports from two colleagues who've just finished reading the manuscript. I've a long way to go yet.

The problem with sending you a reasonable evaluation of the work you've done, is that I must read a great deal more than your own work. Your most recent letter refers on its first page alone to one book and one article I've never read and to seven people whom I could not identify if asked to do so in a quiz or test. You don't realize how deeply immersed you are in the subject (that's not a fault, of course, being so immersed).

I think I know why others can answer more quickly: Donald is just beginning a Lincoln biography and is naturally interested in things that will affect the first chapter; Simon is working on an intimate history of the Lincoln family; Strozier is a psycho-historian and therefore deeply interested in the family; Anderson's opinions are, well, Anderson's opinions.

I am writing on Lincoln's presidency, in fact, on one little specialized part of it, not unlike the specialized subject of genealogy. If I sent you, as I could, my 40-page article on Lincoln's 10 habeas corpus proclamations (9 issued, 1 unissued), you'd probably find it tough going and you might not have any particular opinion of its merits.

Mr. Paul H. Verduin November 27, 1989 Page 2

History is amazingly specialized, and I can say little of any special merit on this subject without a lot more study than I can do just now.

Sincerely yours,

Mark E. Neely, Jr.

MEN/yw

## Plantation Overseers, Patriots, Pioneers: New Light on Lincoln and His Hanks Forebears

by Paul H. Verduin

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721 Dartmouth Ave., Silver Spring, MD 20910; phone 301/495-7891

(An address given February 12, 1992 at the Lincoln Home National Historic Site in Springfield, Illinois as part of the Lincoln Heritage Lectures presented annually at the Lincoln Home by the National Park Service.)

Author's note: Since the eventual publication of this address seems assured, it is requested that copies of this paper not be made without permission of the author. Lincoln scholars and others may apply to the author for manuscript copies, or for endnotes (about 200 in number) coordinated to paragraph subscripts in this text. A genealogical chart has been appended to aid the reader. Written comments by scholars are respectfully requested.

\*\*\*\*\*

"The hand of the amateur has rested heavily upon Lincoln studies," the great Lincoln scholar and biographer James G. Randall ruefully remarked in a landmark address to the American Historical Association 57 years ago. In that speech, the author of the acclaimed biography Lincoln the President cited the study of Lincoln's parentage as one of the principal areas where sloppy research and subjective, sentimental analysis were major problems. He made oblique derogatory reference to what he considered to be unfounded views on this subject held by his contemporary, Louis A. Warren; and later in his

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For the most scholars dur competent ac better off to the comp.

There was one important area, however, where the University of Illinois professor's challenge went unheeded: the study of Abraham Lincoln's childhood, youth and parentage. Only in the past ten years has there been a stirring among scholars in this psychologically and culturally significant portion of Lincoln's life and personal heritage, thanks to the pioneering work of professors Charles B. Strozier, John Y. Simon and Douglas L. Wilson. To this trio of disarmingly dissimilar scholars I must acknowledge a tremendous debt in my own work.2

The marked neglect of the study of Lincoln's origins by competent scholars during the past 60 years was partly the fault of Randall himself. Randall's almost single-minded emphasis on Lincoln the professional man--lawyer and politician--caused him to eschew the seemingly unconfirmable accounts of the sixteenth president's rustic youth and the scattered, paltry records mouldering in back-country courthouses which failed to provide more than the skeleton for a biography of Lincoln's pre-Springfield period. Who could trust

# Wednesday, February 12, 1992 Springfield, Illinois

# Lincoln had family ties to slavery

Two ancestors were overseers — scholar

By KEVIN McDERMOTT

STAFF WRITER

At least two of Abraham Lincoln's ancestors were plantation overseers, and one of them beat a runaway slave to death, according to new research being presented in Springfield today.

Furthermore, the 16th president ilkely knew about his family's tainted past, according to Maryland writer

■ The National Park Service soon will be studying sites and architectural firms for an Abraham Lincoln Center in Springfield/CITY/STATE, page 17

and historian Paul Verduin, who will speak as part of the annual Lincoin Heritage Lectures this morning at the Lincoin Home National Historic Site.

"Lincoln freed the slaves; could some family stories have been passed on to him that gave him shame about slavery?" said Verduin, who has spent flve years tracing Lincoln's maternal lineage back to before the Revolutionary War.

There's no way to confirm that Lincoln was aware of the overseers in his family, Verduin said. "But it was not that far back in the family's past."

Verduln edits The Lincoinian, a blmonthly publication based in Washlngton, and will outline his research today at the Lincoln Home Visitors Center.

His study focuses on the family history of Nancy Hanks Lincoln, the president's mother. That branch of the family tree has been neglected by scholars, in part because Nancy Hanks was an illegitimate child — a subject kept secret by Lincoln, and downplayed or even distorted by some historians.

Verduln uncovered original Hanks-related documents in court-houses and repositories in seven states. He said his research shows more strongly than ever that Lincoln's mother was an illegitimate child. Her father remains unknown.

But Verduin also found a deeper family secret, one that apparently hasn't come to light before: one of Lincoln's maternal great-grandfathers, Joseph Hanks, and a maternal great-great-grandfather, William Lee (Joseph Hanks' father-in-law), were slave overseers in Richmond County, Va., before the Revolutionary War.

According to Verduin's study, Lee was born in 1707 and became a Richmond County plantation overseer. Verduin found criminal court minutes dated May 18, 1743, showing that Lee had been charged with beating a runaway slave to death over a period of three days.

The outcome of the trial is unknown. Additional records long since were destroyed by fire. A typical punishment for murdering a slave, Verduin writes in his study, was "a severe lashing and the branding of his left thumb with the letter 'M' — for manslaughter."

Lee's daughter, Ann, married Joseph Hanks in the late 1750s, and by 1762 Hanks had been hired as overseer at another Richmond County plantation, Verduin found. By 1784, the couple migrated to Kentucky with several children.

One of them, Lucey Hanks, born in 1766, gave birth to two illegitimate children before she married and had eight more kids in wedlock. Lucey Hanks' first illegitimate daughter, Verduin and other historians believe, was Nancy Hanks, Lincoln's mother. She died in 1818, when Lincoln was 10

Lincoln did know about his mother's illegitimacy, and Verduin be-

See LINCOLN on page 3

#### LINCOLN

From page 1

lieves Lincoln knew the rest.

Verduin noted that while Lincoln was growing up, many of his Hanks cousins and other relatives were neighbors, including great-uncle William Hanks, who was old enough to remember the Revolutionary War.

"Any time Lincoln wanted to know something about his mother's family, all he had to do was ask old William Hanks," Verduin said. "I have to believe he did that at some point."

Verduln's speech, titled, "Plantation Overseers, Patriots, Pioneers: New Light on Lincoln and his Hanks Forebears," is being presented in conjunction with a speech by historian Richard Current of the University of North Carolina.

Current, one of the nation's top Lincoln scholars, will discuss Lincoln's influence on America's rise to world power between 1865 and 1914.

The lecture program will begin at 9:30 a.m. today at the Visitors Center, 426 South Seventh St.

In other events today:

The American Legion will hold its 58th annual National Pilgrimage to Lincoln Tomb. Veterans will assemble at 10 a.m. at the Tomb in Oak Ridge Cemetery.

House Minority Leader Robert Michei of Peoria will speak to the Sangamon County Republican Party's annual Lincoln's Day Luncheon at noon at the Prairie Capital Convention Center.

The annual Abraham Lincoln Symposium will focus on "The Lincoln Image in Popular Culture," beginning at 1:30 p.m. at the Old State Capitol. It is free and open to the public. Featured are Lincoln historians Gabor Boritt and Harold Holzer.

The Abraham Lincoln Associa-

■ The Abraham Lincoln Association Banquet, with Housing Secretary Jack Kemp as the featured speaker, is at 7 p.m. at the Ramada Renaissance. Reservations are required. NU 401

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NANCY HANKS

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# THE LINCOLN NATIONAL LINCOLN NATIONAL LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

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CERTIFIES that it has insured the lives of certain Customers and active managers of Customers of

#### SEABURY AND JOHNSON

JERSEY CITY, NEW JERSEY

(Called the Vendor)

(Amelia County, Virginia

This Nancy, their youngest child, was born February 5th, 1784 and named for her mother . ... It was here in old Virginia, that little Nancy lived until she was five years old.

Hitchcock: Nanzy Hanks; p. 25.

Note: The editor of Lincoln Lore was recently told that there was a spot called Hank's Spring near the town of Earls which is located in what was originally Amelia County that was said to have been the birth-place of Lincoln's mother.

by a multiple life policy of insurance, No. E-96, issued to the Vendor and made effective on October 1, 1934.

Name of Insured Person		Name of Customer	
Effective Date	Amount of In	surance	Certificate Number

Subject to the terms and conditions of said Policy, the life of the person named in the foregoing schedule is insured thereunder against death for the amount indicated in said schedule for a period of six months, commencing on the effective date indicated in such schedule and terminating without grace or notice at the end of such period.

Said insurance is payable to the Vendor for the benefit of the Customer named in the foregoing schedule, the amount payable to be applied by the Vendor on its account with the Customer. If the amount paid exceeds said Customer's indebtedness to the Vendor, the excess is payable by the Vendor to the said Customer, if a corporation or partnership, otherwise to the Customer's estate.

The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company

Examined by\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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Secretary

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Lynchburg, Virginia

The grandmother of Abraham Lincoln was called by the several names of Lucy Hanks, Hornback, and Sparrow. Nancy, Lincoln's mother, was the child of Lucy Hanks, Hornback, or Sparrow and a son of Judge John Marshall, of Virginia. Nancy Hanks, Hornback, or Sparrow was born near Lynchburgm Va., and in sight of the Blue Ridge Mountains, and at the fost of them has matter the burned.

Boyd: The Sorrows of Nancy; pp. 77 & 78.

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The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company

Examined by\_\_\_\_\_

FORM 2410-10-34-5000

Secretary

Buth Jack

Nottoway County, Virginia

On the Namozine road between Jennings Ordinary and

Fergusonville on Barehone Creek is a place called Bare Bones,

which tradition says was the birthplace of Nancy Hanks, the

mother of President Lincoln... Regardless of what Dr.

Barton and other authorities on finally way have the records at antelia Court House seem to bear out the tradetion that haven faules was born at Bear bones at that time in amelia.

Turner: Old Homes and Families in Nottoway; p. 100 bitnown nottoway founts.

by a multiple life policy of insurance, No. E-96, issued to the Vendor and made effective on October 1, 1934.

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The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company

Examined by.....

FORM 2410-10-34-5000

Secretary

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Birth. Place

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#### PATRICK HENRY'S GRAVE

Every now and then we see in some newspaper the query, "Where is Patrick Henry buried?" and tourists in Richmond constantly ask to be shown his grave, with the mistaken idea that it is in that city, where much of his public career was passed. Few people, cofparatively, know that the man who acquired the title of "The Tongue of the Revolution" lies in a quiet grave on the estate in Charlotte county where he formerly lived. Over him is a marble slab inscribed with the one line: "His Fame His Best Epitaph."

The estate lies on the Staunton river, 38 miles from the town of Lynchburg, near the border line which separates Charlotte and Campbell counties. It derived its name of Red hill from the peculiar color of the soil in that vicinity. When Patrick Henry bought the place it comprised about 3,500 acrcs. The land is rich—there was a saying in the neighborhood that poor land and Henry could never be mentioned together—corn grows there as high as a man on horseback; there is a general air of smiling fields and abundant prosperity. Its situation in early times was very remote. Neighbors were few, one of the nearest being the celehrated John Rando'ph of Roanoke, who lived in his chosen solitude 15 miles away.

Red hill is now owned by Henry's grandson, William Wirt Henry, a clever, cultivated gentleman of the "old school." He has in his possession some most interesting relics of his celebrated grandfather, including the desk he always used, which still contains his letters from Lafayette, Washington, Madison, and other great men of early days; the large, round-backed chair in which Patrick Henry died, and a portrait of him by the elder Sully, under which hangs a yellowed slip of paper signed by Chief Justice John Marshall and several others of his friends, testifying to the faithfulness of the likeness.—Philadelphia Press.



